

## Action Item

### *California Postsecondary Education Commission*

Executive Director's Report, October 2001

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Executive Director Warren Fox will discuss issues of mutual concern to the commissioners. Included will be a resolution recognizing Commissioner Ralph Pesqueira for his many years of service and valuable contributions to the California Postsecondary Education Commission.

In addition, the Commission may discuss some of the important findings of the year 2000 Census that concluded that California is comprised of a "new majority" population. These findings and other relevant national and statewide data are briefly described in the following paper, *California's New Majority: What Does it Mean for Our Educational System?*

*Recommended Action:* Commission adoption of the resolution for Commissioner Pesqueira.

*Presenter:* Warren H. Fox, Executive Director.



# California's New Majority Population: What Does It Mean for Our Educational System?

Report of the Executive Director

October 1, 2001

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"I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the conditions, promoting the virtue and advancing the happiness of man."

Thomas Jefferson

At the beginning of a new century and a new decade, California is also beginning a "New Majority" of our population, because of changes in racial and ethnic population totals. The 2000 Census describes the extent to which California has indeed become a diverse and populous state. The California Postsecondary Education Commission views a California of tomorrow as one in which all Californians have an expanded opportunity to develop their talents and skills to the fullest, for both individual and collective benefit (CPEC, 98-5). In order to ensure that progress is made toward the realization of this vision, policymakers, educators, and all others interested in the future of education must understand the manner in which California is changing and the many implications of those changes. The 2000 Census and other national data provide us at least a glimpse of those changes taking place and the tools to begin to understand the important context of those changes.

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## California's population

According to Census 2000, California is home to nearly 34 million people, making it the most populous state in the nation. Texas and New York follow in the population standings, but are a distant second and third, with 20.8 million and 18.9 million residents respectively. California's population has virtually tripled in the past 50 years and has grown nearly 14 percent just in the past decade.

In addition, despite California's many rural areas, it is one of the most densely populated states, with approximately 217 persons per square mile. This figure far surpasses the national average of approximately 80 persons per square mile. It is hardly surprising that California is home to some of the most populous areas in the country. Census 2000 found Los Angeles County to be the nation's most populous county, having grown by 7.4 percent in the past decade to more than 9.5 million people. Orange County is also one of the nation's most populous counties, with approximately 2.8 million residents.

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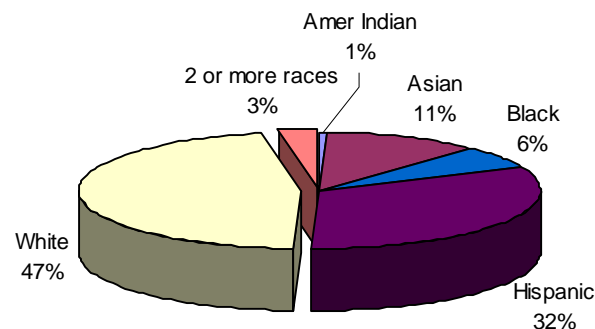
**Changes in  
racial/ethnic  
composition  
of California's  
population**

Perhaps the most significant finding of Census 2000 is the extent of California's diversity. As was widely reported by the media, Census 2000 confirmed what many suspected: that California's population had changed such that no one racial or ethnic group comprises a majority. Census 2000 concluded that California has joined only two other states in the nation – Hawaii and New Mexico – the point where no single ethnic/racial group represents a numerical majority -- a finding that has enormous implications for statewide public policy. We might call this status a new majority.

Display 1 illustrates the diversity of California's population. Most remarkable is that California's non-Hispanic White population shrank to about 47 percent of the state's residents, while the Hispanic and Asian populations grew at rapid rates, now about 32 percent and just over 11 percent of California's population respectively.

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*DISPLAY 1 California Population, 2000 by Race/Ethnicity*



Source: California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit.

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Also of importance is the fact that Mexican-Americans make up the largest Hispanic population in California, at nearly 8.5 million of the 10.9 million Hispanic residents. Nearly one-third of all Hispanics in the United States now live in California. Blacks' share of the population changed little in the 1990's and currently comprises 6.4 percent of the statewide population. Of particular interest is the percentage of Californians who said they were of more than one race exceeds the national average of 2.4 percent and is among the highest in the nation. In addition, Californians speak many languages. According to the census, approximately 12 million residents speak a language other than English at home.

While California's status as a state with a "new majority" may be followed in the coming years by a few other states, the Census Bureau projects that by 2010, the United States will still be more than two-thirds non-Hispanic

White, making California unique in addressing both the challenges and opportunities brought by a large and diverse population.

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**Income  
characteristics  
and educational  
attainment**

It has been widely known by educators and policymakers alike, that a close relationship exists between educational attainment and personal income. Once again, census information confirms that relationship as average annual earnings in 1999 for those residents of the United States ages 18 and over who had completed high school was \$24,572; and for those with a bachelor's degree it was dramatically higher at \$45,678 nationally.

According to the 2000 Census, the median household income of Californians is \$39,595, slightly above the national average of \$37,005. However, the 2000 Census also concluded that 16 percent of California's population is living in poverty, higher than the national average of 13.3 percent. Perhaps the most disturbing finding of the census is that 24.6 percent of California's children live below poverty – a figure that is significantly higher than the national average of 19.9 percent.

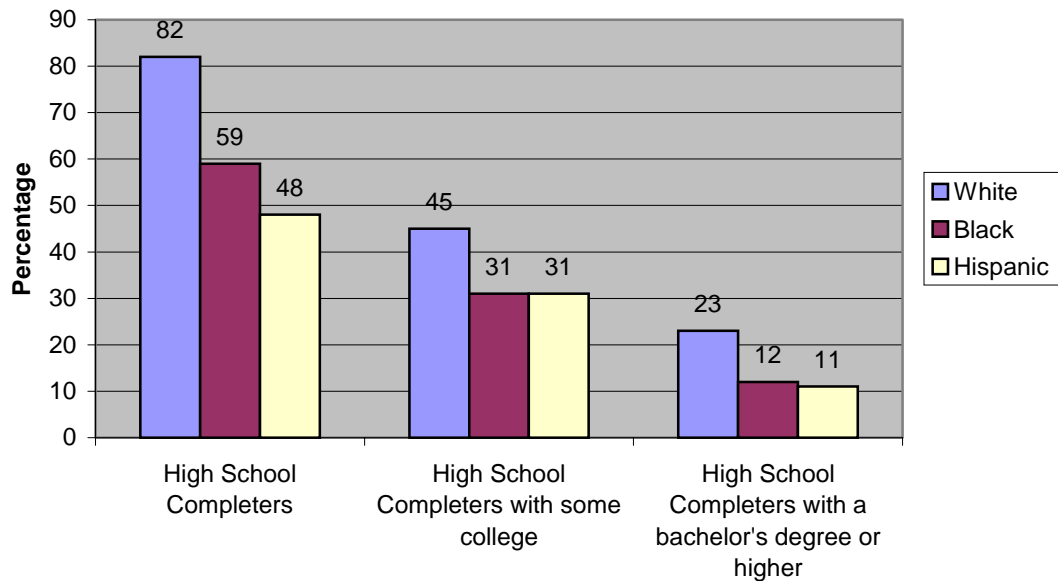
According to the Current Population Survey, which is conducted annually by the U.S. Census Bureau, 84 percent of all adults ages 25 and over in the United States had completed high school and 26 percent had completed a bachelor's degree or higher. Among young adults, ages 25 to 29, the figures are slightly higher with 88 percent completing high school and 29 percent having earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Thirty years ago, in 1971, that figure was lower at approximately 78 percent. The 2000 Census found that there are 14.2 million high school graduates over the age of 25 living in California. California is also the home of 4.3 million college graduates over the age of 25, that is 13.5 percent of the total of the nation's college graduates over the age of 25 (Californians account for 12 percent of the country's over-all population).

Educational attainment is not distributed equally among the various racial ethnic populations, resulting in significant educational gaps between the various diverse populations, a situation that undoubtedly has far reaching implications. Overall in the United States, approximately one in every three 25-29 year old high school completers held a bachelor's degree or higher in 1999. This figure has showed steady improvement over the past three decades when it was 22 percent in 1971. The percentage of female high school completers between the ages of 25-29 has nearly doubled over the past 30 years with 37.3 percent of this population having earned a bachelor's degree or higher, as contrasted with 34.8 percent of males in this category.

Displays 2 and 3 show that African Americans have shown some increase since 1971 when the figure for high school completers with a bachelor's de-

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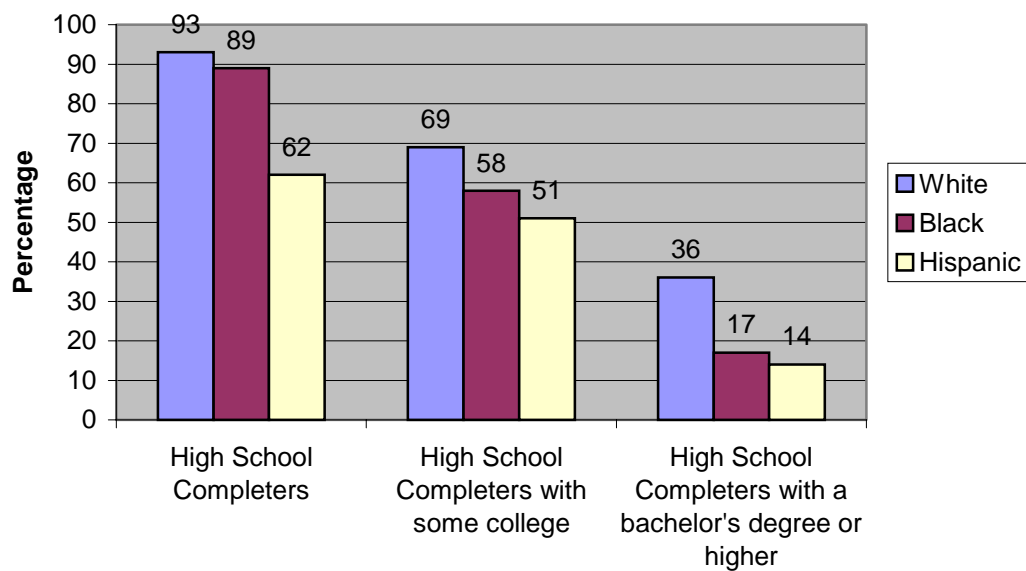
**DISPLAY 2** *National Educational Attainment of 25-29 Year Olds by Race and Ethnicity, 1971 (by percent)*



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

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**DISPLAY 3** *National Educational Attainment of 25-29 Year Olds by Race and Ethnicity, 1999 (by percent)*



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

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gree or higher was 12 percent of all 25-29 year old high school completers earning a bachelor's degree or higher and in 1999 was nearly 17 percent. Likewise, the figure has increased from near 11 percent for Hispanics in 1971 to just over 14 percent in 1999.

Perhaps even more telling about this particular population is that when broken down even further (i.e. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and South American), it is clear that the percentage of Mexican Americans with a bachelor's degree or higher (25 years and over) -- that is, that group which makes up the vast majority (approximately 78 percent) of California's Hispanic population -- is significantly lower at almost 7 percent, while others such as the Cuban population is far higher at approximately 23 percent.

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**The educational  
challenge  
of California's new  
majority status**

The size and composition of California's population pose two particular challenges for educators and policymakers alike. The first challenge is to provide a high quality educational experience for a record number of students -- both elementary, and secondary and postsecondary students. Never before have so many students required educational services from our existing institutions. There are nearly six million students enrolled in our elementary and secondary schools currently and the Commission has estimated that nearly 2.7 million students will seek postsecondary education annually in the coming decade. Over the past decade, the Commission has been pivotal in raising the issue of California's surging postsecondary enrollment demand and the resulting need for additional faculty, facilities, and resources to serve this burgeoning population.

The second challenge is that the State must now serve not only a much larger population, but one which is comprised of a much greater number of students who have historically been underserved by our educational system and who have been historically underrepresented in higher education. It is known from the Commission's most recent eligibility study that examines the percentage of high school graduates who are eligible for the California State University and University of California systems that academic preparation for college varies greatly among racial/ethnic groups.

The Commission's last eligibility study, which examined the California public high school graduating class of 1996, concluded that a little over 13 percent of Black high school graduates and about the same percentage of Latino high school graduates were fully eligible for admission to the California State University, while 36 percent of Whites and 54 percent of Asian high school graduates that year were eligible. Likewise, about 2.8 percent of Black high school graduates and 3.8 percent of Latino high school graduates in 1996 were eligible for the University of California. For White and Asian high school graduates, those numbers were 12.7 and 30 percent respectively. If academic preparation in the elementary and secondary years is central to admission to and ultimately, success in, college, it is little surprise then that the census figures show such disparate gaps in educational attainment.

Hence, it is absolutely critical to California's social and economic well-being that California make rapid and significant progress in reducing, and ultimately eliminating, the educational gap that exists between the various diverse populations living in California. California can only maintain its status as a global economic powerhouse if it affords those living in the new California many of the same opportunities as generations past, especially the new majority.

Succeeding in meeting these challenges does not require magical solutions, but rather a solid commitment to moving forward, in a large measure, in the direction we have already begun. At a minimum, these efforts include the following:

1. **A continuing commitment to public education and also to the underlying tenants of the Master Plan for Higher Education.** That is, all students who are qualified and can benefit from a high quality, affordable higher education experience should be provided with the opportunity. The particular size or composition of the state's population should in no way change California's historical educational commitment to its residents.
2. **Continued focus on improving the academic preparation of K-12 students.** California must continue to adopt strategies, policies, and practices aimed at improving student performance in the K-12 years in order to prepare them for both the world of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and for eligibility and success in postsecondary education. Attempts must be made to monitor student achievement and improve the tools used for assessing that progress. We must continue to invest in those things that we know are effective such as improving the preparation and quality of teachers. And we must have the will to abandon policies and practices that evidence little effect while continuing to seek those that do. In addition, we must continue to invest in educational research so that we can better understand the various ways in which students learn such that we can incorporate what we know into an educational system that is expected to serve as many diverse learning styles as there are students. And finally, higher education must continue to take an active role in ensuring the success of California's K-12 system.
3. **Ensure adequate educational facilities.** In order to ensure adequate learning environments for California's nearly six million school children and 2.7 million postsecondary education students anticipated to enroll in higher education in the coming decade, California will have to continue to invest heavily in building new facilities, replacing and renovating many older crumbling buildings, and invest in new technologies that are deemed critical for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
4. **Make community colleges a statewide priority.** The greatest number of the state's postsecondary students enroll in the community colleges and will continue to do so. For some, it is just the beginning of a postsecond-

ary career, for others it will be their only experience. To best serve the state's new population, California must ensure that students receive the highest quality of educational experience, regardless of campus or program. In addition, we must, despite years of trying, once and for all improve the transfer function to make it simple, understandable, and ensure a smooth transition into a baccalaureate granting institution. And finally, we must ensure that the community colleges are equal partners in California's higher education community. We must ensure that adequate resources are provided to allow them to effectively carry out their charge.

5. **Continue to monitor access, persistence, and completion rates for postsecondary students.** Closing the educational gap between the various diverse populations of the new majority requires that we continue to collect and analyze data to inform public debate and effect change in educational policy, when necessary. Student access and success must go hand in hand. Accountability from our postsecondary educational institutions is critical. Ensuring that greater percentages of students from all diverse backgrounds are eligible and enrolled in postsecondary education is only the beginning. Monitoring their progress through the system to completion is equally as important. Asking critical questions when little improvement is shown is essential, as is investing in programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving student achievement, particularly with groups historically underserved and underrepresented in higher education. The Commission's expanded student information system should go a long way in better understanding the successes and limitations of our postsecondary institutions.

California's diversity – racial/ethnic, age, language, culture, and gender – make it one of the most exciting and interesting places on earth to live. In addition, California's relative prosperity and economy have provided a high quality of living for a large number of its residents. The differences in California's population could either alienate and segregate us from one another or they could afford us with unlimited opportunities. California's future is directly related to the course of action we take in collectively meeting the challenges of a diverse population.

Reducing, and ultimately eliminating the educational gaps that exist currently among our new population ought to be among California's highest priorities. Not only is it an economic and social necessity, but one that many would argue is a moral imperative as well. By so doing, we all benefit.







# CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

## Resolution Commending Ralph R. Pesqueira

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- WHEREAS** Ralph R. Pesqueira has represented the California State University Board of Trustees on the California Postsecondary Education Commission, having been appointed in May 1997; and
- WHEREAS** Commissioner Pesqueira, as a two-term member of the Board of Trustees and as a member of the Commission, advanced not only the cause of the State University and its students, but all of higher education as well; and
- WHEREAS** Ralph Pesqueira, is a respected member of the business community of the City of San Diego where he has been active in civic affairs, particularly those endeavors associated with planning and development, and a leader in the Latino Mexican/American sector; and
- WHEREAS** Commissioner Pesqueira, over nearly five years as a member of the Commission, served on numerous committees, including most recently as a member of the Fiscal Policy and Programs Committee and as chair of the Educational Policy and Programs Committee; and
- WHEREAS** Commissioner Pesqueira has participated in the overall work of the Commission, displaying both dedication to duty and a willingness to address the challenging higher education issues of the day; and
- WHEREAS** He discharged his duties as a Commissioner in the educational sectors with thoughtful analyses that was informed by experience, not only as a civic leader and respected member of the Latino community, but also that of a former officer in the U.S. Army; and
- WHEREAS** Commissioner Pesqueira continues to represent the highest ideals of civic responsibility, both in his home community of San Diego and the state at large; and for which he has received numerous citations and awards, now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** On this 1<sup>st</sup> day of October 2001, that the California Postsecondary Education Commission wishes to recognize the many contributions that Ralph Pesqueira has made to the advancement of all people of the State of California in their pursuit of educational opportunity; and be it further
- RESOLVED** That the California Postsecondary Education Commission wishes to commend Commissioner Ralph R. Pesqueira for a job well done.

Presented this first day of October, 2001, on behalf of the Commission by:

Alan S. Arkatov, *Chair*

Warren Halsey Fox, *Executive Director*

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